

Friday, Feb. 12, 2010



**ENQUIRER**

Established 1900

## OUR OPINIONS

# Matter of consistency

Alcohol-sales law should apply to preschools

**M**ichigan law long has forbidden the sale of alcohol near schools and churches.

But it turns out that the state law's definition of "school" is an institution for kindergartners through 12th-graders.

Thus there is no legal prohibition against a West Michigan Avenue

convenience store owner seeking a permit to sell beer and wine, even though the establishment is right next door to a preschool.

Some neighborhood residents and parents of children who attend

the Munger Center have petitioned the Michigan Liquor Control Commission to deny a beer-and-wine permit for the nearby Sunset Store. The MLCC ruled in the petitioners' favor at an initial hearing, but the store owner has appealed.

### ENQUIRER'S VIEW

■ **THE ISSUE:** Allow the sale of alcohol near preschools.

■ **WE THINK:** Because state law long has prohibited alcohol sales within 500 feet of a school or church, that law should be clarified to include preschools as well as K-12 institutions.

■ **WHAT ABOUT YOU?**

Tell us what you think. Information on how to publish your ideas appears with 'Readers' Views' at right.

Opponents of the permit say it is unhealthy for young children to be exposed to an environment where alcohol is sold right outside their schoolhouse door. Supporters counter that proceeds from selling beer and wine are necessary to make the business profitable, and that it is unfair to automatically link such establishments to crime and unsavory elements.

Strong arguments can be made on both sides, but the two divergent views leave little room for compromise.

To us it seems more a matter of legal consistency than moral judgment.

Surely if the state of Michigan has deemed it inappropriate to sell alcohol within 500 feet of a "school," that standard should be applied to children of all ages, not just those of kindergarten age and older.

That's why we think state Rep. Kate Segal is right to introduce legislation that would clarify the situation by prohibiting the issuance of liquor licenses to businesses within 500 feet of preschools as well as K-12 schools.

While her bill would not apply to stores that already sell alcohol legally near preschools, it would close a loophole and prevent similar situations from arising in the future.

